Li Lorimer T-3 (1930-4; 1934-8) 1938 AVT Burusho AVT

these narrow planks placed side by side and pierced by horizontal holes through which two parallel rods are threaded; the hinge is a longer piece of wood pointed at both ends and rotating into holes in threshold and lintel; while the whole is secured by an ingenious wooden lock. Most villages, however, now possess a carpenter or two, trained in the P.W.D. workshop at Gilgit and armed with plane and saw, who can produce more Europeanized doors and cupboards, to the greater comfort of their owners and the selfish regret of the anthropologist. The old, home-made door is still in use for barn and byre.

Every peasant family is almost entirely self-supporting and independent, eating the produce of its own laboriously and beautifully terraced fields (PLATE I), wearing the woollen cloaks and caps spun and woven from the wool of its own sheep, and booted from the skin of its own beasts. The only foreign garments worn are the cotton shirts and trousers of comparatively recent introduction, now considered indispensable by both sexes, and the merry little cotton caps, plain or silk-embroidered, which have replaced the heavy woollen salvation-army bonnet of the women. Butter is made and water carried in skins; grain and flour are carried in skin-bags or sacks and stored in skin-sacks or wooden bins. Rugs, saddlebags and ropes are woven of goat's hair.

In a country where no unirrigated tree can grow, timber is very scarce. An old apricot or appletree is sometimes available, or the root of an old vine, otherwise the only general timber is the poplar, grown primarily for poles and rafters, and the willow, absolutely essential for baskets (PLATE II), a dozen varieties of which are needed for carrying apricots, manure, dry leaves, straw etc., and for storing potatoes and dried fruit.

The soil of Hunza is unimaginably poor, consisting in fact of little but powdered-up mountain side. The scarcity of water means also the non-existence of pasture, and the few animals that can be fed eke out a spartan existence on the scraps of grass growing on the rare semi-irrigated strips of hillside or beside the water-channels, and on such weeds amongst the growing crops as are not earmarked for human consumption or remain after the crops have been reaped. This scanty provision is supplemented by the autumn harvest of dry leaves (not one of which lies on the ground ungarnered), the straw and stubble, and occasionally a small quantity of dried grass. Only a few families command enough land and water to grow a little lucerne for fodder. The most livestock that the average household of 10 to 20 persons

1: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1938 AVT Burusho AVT

ANTIQUITY

233 The most livestock that the average household of 10 to 20 persons
241 hopes to possess is a tiny flock of 20 to 25 sheep, goats and cows. In
237 these circumstances manure is more precious than gold, and the small
592 children who conduct a cow to pasture carry a shoulder basket in which every ounce of the day's output is scrupulously collected and brought home.

233 When the snow retreats on the upper mountains a few patches of green are left here and there, and the more athletic beasts are taken up by young men who live in shelters with their charges, collect the manure, convert the milk into butter and bring these home with the animals when the snows claim their own again. These patches of high pasture, several thousand feet above the villages, are all too few and can only be reached by serious feats of mountaineering. Through field-glasses we could see the grazing animals clinging—by their eyebrows as it seemed—to their precipitous 'summer pastures', but it was impossible to ride up even on a yak, and at our age impossible to climb on foot for a nearer view.

As soon as the trees put out their leaves in spring, each 'donkey tree' (*i.e.*, non-fruit-bearing) is stripped of every scrap of spare foliage to feed the half-starved beasts. This luxury diet has to be very carefully administered lest the animals should perish of its unaccustomed succulence.

243 The major crops grown by the Hunza people for their own use are
[177] wheat, barley, several kinds of millet, sweet and bitter buckwheat, nowadays also the highly-valued potato (introduced by the British in 1892) and small quantities of various pulses. Barley must have been the original staple crop, for all the traditional festivals, the Seed-sowing of early spring, the First Reaping of early summer and the Harvest
[242] Home, relate to barley alone. The peasant is wise about rotation of crops and the various types of wheat, millet, etc., which thrive best in given conditions. Wheaten bread is much preferred to any other, but barley remains the larger crop because spring-sown barley ripens three or four weeks before even the winter-sown wheat, and the vacant fields can be resown with millet; whereas after the wheat only buckwheat can hope to ripen before winter. Bitter buckwheat is frankly detested, but it is hardier than the sweet and can better withstand an attack of early frost, so a certain amount of it is always sown as an insurance.

So poor is the soil, so scanty the manure, that in the newer villages like Aliabad, the average return is only sevenfold and even the storeyed fields of Baltit, which have been tilled in the sweat of man and woman's brow for at least 600 years and probably for twice or thrice as long, yield

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AVT Buruaho AVT

is convenient. Each person has his own wooden bowl and wooden spoon. They roll up their pancakes and dip them in their bowl of thick vegetable soup or take up the soup with the spoon. The head woman of the house apportions a fair share to each, and I fear there is rarely enough to allow of second helpings.

The art of rationing the family all through the year is recognized as a difficult one; each able-bodied man is entitled to double a woman's ration, but the expectant or nursing mother gets a larger share than the other women; each child after weaning gets a certain ration according to its age.

If a *núli gus* (housewife-in-chief) is over-generous with her rationing during the post-harvest months of plenty the whole family may starve before next year; so a "competent woman" is highly valued, and incompetence is a fair ground for divorce. No ill-will is felt or expressed, but back she goes to the father and mother who bred her.

The No. 1 Household consists of grandfather, a charming old man, who proudly boasts that he built the house they live in and himself laid out the fruit garden; his two sons, who now do all the heavy work and who both are lucky enough to have small jobs connected with the hospital—this accounts for the family's relative well-to-do-ness; the elder son's wife is my friend Bibi Gímo, the *núli gus*; the younger son's wife is a beautiful girl Naját, who became one of our best friends. In a community where all faces are happy and kindly, she has the happiest face I have ever seen, and a natural grace of bearing and manner that would adorn any station in any country. Naját so far has no children, but Bibi Gímo's married daughter was staying with her at the moment. There is also an adolescent daughter, Shukuru, who is already growing her hair, and will no doubt presently be married; two nice boys of perhaps thirteen and nine, and the two little girls I have mentioned already, Shamúli, say six, and Banu of three or four, and I imagined there would ere long be another child.

On my second visit, since they had all been so kind to me, I took a tiny rubber ball for Banu. It was a great success. Not only she and Shamúli played with it, but the grown-ups

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

Chapter 18

SEPTEMBER HARVEST

SUMMER is a breathless time in the Hunza fields. No sooner 243
does the ripening grain show a fine "fox-brown" than a line 516
of five or six men and women attack it in unison. They do 592
not "reap" in our sense of the word. They squat in that inimitably convenient way that the East has preserved for working—no backs bent with stooping, no knees worn out with kneeling—and grasp a full handful of the ripe stalks and pull up roots and all; first right, then left; clap the two together to shake off the all-too-valuable earth; lay the bundle behind them; shuffle on a pace and repeat. The fields are small and in an incredibly short space of time a golden field is prostrate and the ground carpeted with neatly aligned rows of swathes. It is beautiful to see a party at work: father and mother, daughters, sons, and wives; they space themselves and keep their line as exactly as soldiers on parade, yet each works individually, each at his own pace and in his own way—without haste and without pause. They possess rude iron sickles, but 412
when these are used at all they are not used to *cut*, but merely to pull against, if the crop is more than usually deep-rooted.

When the *shandiming* (cut crops) have lain a little and been 243
turned over once or twice they are tied into sheaves and 482
gathered into piles, some as big as a man can carry, others smaller to suit a boy—according to the "man-power" available. A double goat's hair rope is slipped round the waist of the pile and ingeniously knotted so as to leave two shoulder loops. The man or boy flings himself down backwards on to it, slips his arms through the loops and hitches the rope fast. Then some kindly bystander gives a touch to the load from behind,

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AVT Burusho AVT

aluminium ones, a few had even iron buckets. Several people were busy serving, while the headmen acted as masters of the ceremonies. Every household—there are two hundred all told in Aliábád—was entitled to carry off one chunk of meat and one ladleful each of *sherbet* and *harise* for each mouth at home.

As always in this happy place, the company was full of jokes, laughter, and good temper. There was no hustling, no jostling, no attempt by anyone to secure more than his due share. Any person who had lent one of the big cauldrons (they are costly vessels brought up from down country) was granted an extra "mouthful" as hire, and anyone who had lent a penknife for cutting up was given an extra chunk of meat impaled on it. The people who had lent the tripods were not entitled to anything extra; this apparent injustice was thus explained: "You are fond of your cooking-cauldron; you are fond of your penknife; but no one could possibly be fond of a tripod."

We moved about for some time among the crowd, greeting old acquaintances and making new ones, then the people insisted that we must sit down, cleared one of the stone sofas, dashed into the Assembly Hall and brought out a carpet and spread it for us, while one of the headmen came and sat by explaining the procedure of the festival and naming the various utensils. As the light grew David took a few photographs, but by that time most of the carcases had been hacked to bits and a large number of households, having got their share, had gone home to celebrate a sort of family Christmas dinner with it. Nor for the first time, still less for the last, I regretted my lack of enterprise in sticking to my old familiar quarter-plate camera with its lens working only to F.6.3. David with his 3.5's could get photographs in much weaker light than I.

They insisted on pressing on us a "share" for each of our servants. How can you assess, how hope to repay, the generosity of these hospitable people? Remember that hardly any house has more than *just enough* to eat for the year; yet they must share their feast with our relatively pampered retainers! We could only gratefully accept and as a poor return offer the headman some money for distribution as they thought best "to the orphans and the poor." Hunza has, of course, no charitable

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Bibi Sajo club; and a neighbour.

2. Hawal Nau with baby niece (the first grandchild).

PLATE XIV: Household of Nau. 6 (See p. 159)

1. Ghazi Nadira and Hawal Nau.

[Facing P. 160]

2: Lorimer T-3 (1930-4, 1934-5) 1939 AVT Burusho AVT

MARRIAGE IN HUNZA

Where a couple are definitely ill-matched, or the daughter-in-law fails to fit into the family scheme, the regrettable fact is faced, the two families meet to arrange a divorce, and each party is free to remarry and hope for better luck. Nothing, however, in our Hunza observations amazed us more than the amicable relations that normally prevailed among the women of a household. There would be a mother-in-law with three or four sons' wives, all perhaps with growing families about them, an adolescent girl or two, and the herd of youngsters. They work together from dawn to dusk without argument or recrimination, and apparently without anyone's attempting to shirk her fair share of the common tasks.

An expectant mother works on in house and field till the very last, but by common consent the heavier tasks are divided amongst the others, and an extra-nourishing ration is assigned to her both before and after the baby's birth. There is no sentimental pampering of the mother, but her immediate job is the baby, and she is expected naturally to concentrate on that. When a woman's monthly affliction overtakes her, she dresses in her oldest clothes and lies immobile by the fire till she is well again. The others make *daudo* for her, a porridge of flour well boiled in water, which is reputed very sustaining, and bring it to her, saying, "Sister, eat." After two days she is herself again, takes a bath, washes her clothes, and sweeps the house; but she is not banished as a pariah nor subject to any degrading superstitions nor to any taboo not imposed by nature.

Shyly one day my friend Zénība asked me was it true that white women were immune from monthly trouble. "We notice that English ladies seem to ride and camp at all times; we have never heard of one of you having to lie up." I explained our habits and conventions, and that we made it our pride to carry on outwardly unruffled. "But surely it can't be good for you?" "I don't believe it is; but there you are; it is our custom, and we should think it shame if the household noticed any difference in our behaviour. It sometimes makes us cross and fretful perhaps, and then our menfolk just think how unreasonable women are." She laughed heartily: "So that's how it is; we've always wondered; but I think our way is better."

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1. Golden Palace of Nu, weeping. (See p. 1941)

PLATE XVII

592

1. Family group of Nu. 11. Mike seated in background watches Nut proudly rocking his first grandson. (See p. 1911)

[Facing Page]